

Samuel Liberty Harvey Fuller (1942–2001): a biographical sketch and his works on malacology

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ABSTRACT

This article lists all of Samuel Liberty Harvey Fuller's almost 60 publications, most of which treat Unionoidea. Fuller described a new molluscan taxon, *Elliptio marsupiobesa*, in 1972.

Additional key words: new species, taxonomy, biogeography, North America.

Samuel (Sam) Liberty Harvey Fuller was born on March 2, 1942, the first son of Alan Henry and Vera Harvey Fuller. He spent his childhood on land that had been farmed by his family for four generations. The Fullers were amongst the earliest settlers of Suffield, Connecticut, where they persist in some numbers to this day and have long been prominent in the affairs of Suffield Academy. During Fuller's youth his father was forced to give up tobacco growing because of a new development in the manufacture of cigar wrappers to become a teacher of mathematics at Suffield Academy, Suffield, Connecticut. Sam's early penchant for natural history was encouraged by his parents who took him on Saturdays to Springfield, Massachusetts. There he spent mornings at the YMCA and afternoons at the Springfield Natural History Museum. He became a role model for his three younger siblings, Henry, Woodbridge (Woody), and a sister, Tamsen. Woody Fuller, who spent hours with his brother searching for freshwater mussels along the Windsor Locks Canal, called Sam a "curiosity mentor and a natural teacher. He helped me to be curious about the world. He was good at stimulating interest in other people."

A brilliant student at Wooster, Sam was one of the few who graduated with a "6 average," its most superior grade. He achieved perfect SAT scores and became, I believe, the first of his branch in a long line of Fullers in America to attend Harvard College, where he enjoyed a Harvard National Scholarship (1960–1963). In his first letter to the Museum of Comparative Zoology, dated

March 26, 1958, Sam begins, "Dear Sirs: I am sending to your department several varieties of freshwater mollusk which I hope you might identify for me." This was the beginning of a beautiful friendship with Curator William J. Clench that lasted until Clench's death in 1984. Sam spent much time during his undergraduate years at the Department of Mollusks, where he would usually appear as a tatterdemalion. He dressed as a gentleman only when he set off to Roxbury to tutor underprivileged children. He spent the month of August and some of September 1961 collecting in the rivers of Georgia with Clench and Kenneth Jay Boss, who would later succeed Clench as Curator of Mollusks. Early in the trip, while on the quest for large *Elliptio hopetonensis*, at the first really successful collecting site in the Altamaha River, Boss rescued Sam from almost certain drowning.

The following summer, Sam joined me, my wife, and two small daughters on an "expedition", as we called it, to peninsular Florida to collect freshwater mussels. He was an excellent babysitter, able to keep the girls amused, and a fine field collector. We made 49 successful collecting stops. He humored my then wife when she tried to help interpret our county maps her way. They were able to establish distant kinship through Stephen Fuller Austin, the Texan hero of the Alamo who had also been born in Suffield, Connecticut. It was Sam's responsibility to navigate whilst one of us drove. He worked on his life list of birds, and would cry out the name of each one he sighted which was new to him. In the evenings after the last shell had been cleaned, he would practice on his guitar, for which he had no talent, or else read avidly the works of William Faulkner or novels such as *Steppenwolf* and *Demian* by Herman Hesse. Before the summer was over, I was also reading these books and discussing them with Sam. In 1964, upon graduating from Harvard with a degree in biology, Sam received a Ford Foundation grant and went to Tanzania for a year as an instructor at the Kurasini International College. He left behind June, the Radcliffe junior he intended to marry, to complete her undergraduate studies.

Sam had several narrow escapes in Africa, one of which was an attack by a swarm of killer bees. Through

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his own accounts and by my observations Sam was accident-prone. In an amusing 1971 article, one of several Sam wrote for the Academy's popular publication, *Frontiers*, he relates, "I picked my way across Old Brown's yard, knocked, and tripped flat on my face into the kitchen." I had planned another trip to the South for him when he returned from Africa, but his commitment to civil rights, shared by his fiancée whose parents were social workers, and their determination to collect and participate in the civil rights movement, led me to cancel the trip. Those were troubled times in the South and I insisted that civil rights work, although admirable, could be done effectively only under the protection of an umbrella organization.

Upon Sam's return to the United States, June put off the wedding because of the recent death of her father. Eventually, their engagement was dissolved. Sam took a post teaching at the Wooster School in Danbury, Connecticut, from which he had so brilliantly graduated not many years before. In 1968, Sam wrote to Dr. Clench informing him that he was to be married to Mary (Micki) Lou Bush at the Wooster School. Soon after their marriage, Dr. Ruth Patrick of the Department of Limnology of the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia called me about a position to assist in her department. Since it did not interest me, I recommended Sam, who I thought to be a perfect candidate. With some trepidation, he accepted Dr. Patrick's offer. Micki and he settled in New Jersey where they became parents of two children. A glance at Sam's bibliography between 1971 and 1981 reveals his impressive contributions to the study of Unionoidea. Without ever taking a higher degree, he had schooled himself in their anatomy and molecular genetics. He was also responsible for an extensive geographic survey of the mussels of the Upper Mississippi River and led symposia on endangered species. Sam also found time to act as an instructor at Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey.

His independent work habits appear eventually to have caused his severance from the Academy. He returned to Connecticut where the family was in a serious automobile accident, not of his making, in October 1973. His son, Samuel, Jr., was killed and his daughter, Rebecca, seriously injured. A divorce ensued.

In 1990, Sam wrote, "I seem to be back in biology after seven lean, unwelcome years of sorrow and loss." After an absence of a quarter of a century, Sam paid a visit to the Department of Mollusks at Museum of Comparative Zoology when he was on his way to Florida to work again on his favorite mollusks as Research Associate with James D. Williams of the National Fisheries Research Center of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Gainesville, Florida. After a few years there, he disappeared from view, only to reappear through the kindness of Mrs. Deborah M. Heath, who saw that he was comfortably cared for before his death of lung cancer on April 13, 2001. He had earlier predicted that lung cancer would get him as it had his father. He and I carried on a spirited correspondence toward the very

end. In his last letter to me from Ocala, Florida, he mentioned his intention of naming a new species of mussel after me.

Harvard College graduates stage reunions every five years and publish a volume of autobiographies of classmates on each occasion. There seems to be an indication that those who contribute to Class Reports live longer than those who do not. It does not follow that the longer the report, the longer the life. Samuel Liberty Harvey Fuller never contributed to a Class Report. He was listed as "lost" at the Wooster School until shortly before his death. He is now listed "In Memoriam" with his Harvard Class of 1964.

NEW TAXA INTRODUCED BY SAMUEL LIBERTY HARVEY FULLER

splendens, *Gnathophyllum* Chase and Fuller, 1971 (Decapoda, Caridea). Proceedings of the Biological Society of Washington (1970) 83: 493–505 (Puerto Yabucoa, 0.5 mi. E Playa de Guayanés, Municipio de Yabucoa, Puerto Rico; holotype United States National Museum 134422 [only specimen]).

marsupiobesa, *Elliptio* Fuller, 1972. Proceedings of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia 124(1): 1–10, pl. 1, fig. 1 (Cape Fear River, 0.1 mile downstream from Carvers Creek, about 3 miles SW of Slocomb, and about 6 miles NNE of Fayetteville, Cumberland Co., North Carolina). Female holotype Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia (ANSP) 324501; paratypes Museum of Comparative Zoology (MCZ) 272780, ANSP 324502(16), 324503(2), 324504(3), 324505(1).

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Figure 1. Samuel Liberty Harvey Fuller. October, 1973.

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